THE DISSENTERS' PRESENT CLAIMS

CONSIDERED IN A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH

OF

WARRINGTON,

On the Thirtieth of JANUARY, MDCCXC.

By EDWARD OWEN, M. A. Rector.

WARRINGTON,

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS hasty sketch, designed only at first for the temporary purpose of the day, is now published for two reasons; because a very respectable audience, which attended that day's service, conceived, that, imperfect as it is, it may be useful at this particular alarming crisis; and because the Dissenters, some of whom attended the church likewise out of curiosity, have suggested, as I am told, that I durst not publish it as containing much false reasoning and misrepresentation.

I am conscious of nothing but of its imperfection, in point of composition. The impartial reader, however, will consider, that there is a wide difference between pieces designed for the ear and eye; the latter allowing and requiring generally a minuter investigation and ampler discussion, than the ear will bear. I have added a few notes to supply defects.

I know how dangerous it is to make concessions to determined adversaries; who will accept of one's concessions and disregard his arguments. But I shall not hesitate, however, to declare, that, if I could possibly conceive, that further indulgences could be granted to the Dissenters without endangering our Establishment, or that there could be a decent competence provided for their ministers and us within the Establishment (which I am certain is not the case in the present impoverished state of the church) I should abhor myself as an illiberal selfish fellow-citizen, if I uttered one word, or wrote one line to hurt or oppose them.

A

SERMON, &c.

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1 PETER ii. 16.

Not using your LIBERTY *for a Cloak of* MALICIOUSNESS.

HAVING always professed myself, and being cordially, as I believe, a friend to liberty both civil and religious, I embrace the present solemnity as a favourable opportunity of showing, that a just patriotic love of liberty should incline us to oppose rather than favour the measures pursued at this time by the Dissenters.

We live in a state consisting of a *King*, *Lords*, and *Commons*, that is, a state partly monarchical, partly aristocratic, partly democratical; a form of government,

conſidered by all ſpeculative politicians as the wiſeſt and beſt in the world. And a patriotic citizen, in a government of this kind, is one, who ſtudies to keep up that *equipoiſe* between the three orders, which is neceſſary to give them an effective and beneficial co-operation ;—guarding againſt a prevalence of power in any one of them, as, by change of circumſtances, it happens to preponderate.

A patriotic citizen, then, approves of the REFORMATION ; becauſe it extirpated Popery, which had ſwallowed up the rights of all orders, and made this nation a mere *province* to the Biſhop of Rome ; though he, in fact, has no more right even of ſpiritual power in England, than the Archbiſhop of Canterbury has in Rome.

A patriotic citizen, again, approves of the *oppoſition* made againſt the unhappy martyr of this day, — I mean, in the firſt ſtages of contention between him and his parliament ; becauſe the regal prerogative wanted

wanted to be aſcertained and confined within proper bounds; and becauſe the ſtate of religious ſects required a milder ſyſtem of diſcipline than what was known at that time in the church.

He alſo approves of the *Excluſion Bill*, that made ſo much confuſion in the days of the ſecond Charles; becauſe it was but a neceſſary guard againſt the return of that enſlaving religion, from which the ſpirit and virtue of our forefathers had freed this prieſt-ridden kingdom.

And, as this failed, he heartily approves of the REVOLUTION; which the defeat of the excluſion-bill rendered neceſſary, as it provided for a Proteſtant ſucceſſion in the ſtate, and a lenient eſtabliſhment in the church, adapted at once to order and the exerciſe of private judgment, the ground of all proteſtantiſm.

And when, upon the death of Queen Ann without iſſue, the alternative lay between the Houſe of Hanover and a

Popiſh claimant, he could not heſitate a moment in giving the preference to the former, in purſuance of the generous views taken up at the revolution.

Now theſe are the great eras, in the hiſtory of the parties, which diſtract this kingdom. And in all theſe the Diſſenters have indeed their merit; as being zealous friends both to civil and religious liberty. But their misfortune is, that their zeal has ever been *intemperate*. They have ever mixt with their love of liberty ſome other views and motives, which the lovers of conſtitutional peace and order never could adopt. For they have too much of the *republican* ſpirit in their idea of civil liberty; and in their notion of religious liberty they have too great a fondneſs for *novelty*, variety and *changeableneſs* of ſyſtem and opinion.

Extremes beget extremes. *Their* exceſſes, I think, begat correſpondent exceſſes in ſome miſtaken over-zealous churchmen; and if this ſpirit ſtill remained in the church,

church, I ſhould be among the firſt to hold it out to public abhorrence. But it remains no more. The merit (if it be a merit) of retaining their old original temper belongs only to our adverſaries; and, that I may oppoſe them with the firmneſs which ſound truth demands, and with the meekneſs which chriſtian charity inſpires, I muſt aver, that in all thoſe eras, which I have mentioned, the Diſſenters had a deal in their conduct, which we muſt blame, as well as commend.

Thus, for inſtance, at the reformation, their animated efforts againſt Romiſh ſuperſtition were exceedingly uſeful; but they *ſhould* have conſidered at that time, that it anſwered all the purpoſes of *emancipation* from Papal ſlavery, that we had a decent, rational, and pious Liturgy, eſtabliſhed by *national* authority, to which all peaceable citizens ſhould ſubmit: for here we threw off the bondage of a foreign yoke, the myſterious jargon of prayer in an unknown language, and provided very ſufficiently for general peace and harmony,

inſtruction.

instruction and edification.* No: but this would not satisfy their exuberant zeal: they could not bear the least resemblance to

* This will require illustration. For the Dissenters and Papists, though they differ widely in their views, yet agree in making religion independent of the civil magistrate. But I should conceive, that this very principle, so openly avowed in the present resolutions of the Dissenters, is sufficient of itself to ruin their cause: for an enlightened legislature will surely never give up to either of these parties a privilege which it recovered and established, in a ruder age, above two hundred years ago; I mean, its *supremacy in all causes and over all persons civil and ecclesiastical.* It is a right inherent in all states, and necessary to their existence. There will, indeed, be an occasion either for lenity or severity in restraining such citizens as dispute this authority, according to the degrees of their folly or perverseness or malignity; and I have often lamented it as a misfortune, that a toleration was not an original part of our reformed constitution; for the purpose of obtaining the *advantages* of private judgment, while an established system guarded against its *caprices*.

A toleration and a total subversion of all established systems are two very distinct and different things. There is as much danger of *confusion* in suffering every man to become his own Pope, *i. e.* to form his own religion or to have no religion at all, according to his own choice or caprice or impulse of passion or prejudice, as there is of *tyranny* in admitting the Pope's claim to an universal monarchy over the judgments and consciences of mankind.

Our happy constitution, in its present temperament, avoids both these extremes. There is liberty of conscience enough to

to the tyrant-church, which had ſo long oppreſſed and enſlaved them; and this too, even in uſages and doctrines, which had primitive authority; as epiſcopacy, regular ordination, baptiſm, confirmation, and ſome other things of real value in reli-

to guard againſt the impoſitions of prieſtcraft, and order enough to carry on ſome effective courſe of general inſtruction, a thing certainly neceſſary for man, *born like a wild aſſes' colt*, as ſcripture ſays in conſonance with the ſoundeſt philoſophy. Job. xi. 12. There is again independence enough in its miniſters' claim to a divine appointment, to ſecure the purity of religion and to keep it from being a ſtate-engine; and there is a ſufficient degree of reſpect and ſubmiſſion reſerved for the magiſtrate by their acknowledgment that their peace and maintenance flow from the protection and liberality of the ſtate.

Biſhop Warburton's alliance, though a laboured, and ſcientific performance, is founded upon ſuch ſound yet liberal principles; and yet all the anſwer made to it by a capital diſſenting writer * are a few quibbling objections and the following ſtrange concluſion. — " It is with pleaſure I turn from " a Biſhop, whoſe ſyſtem ſavours ſo much more of tyranny " than of chriſtianity."

And whom does he then turn to? Why, to the liberal Mr. Archdeacon Paley, whom he commends as far as he likes his principles, and no further.

* *The right of Proteſtant Diſſenters to a complete toleration by a [real or pretended] Layman.*

gion;

gion;—and hence a ſeparation began and went on and increaſed to the next era I mentioned; oppoſition to Charles the firſt.

And here, again, they had the merit of reſiſting the exorbitant claims of regal prerogative and church power. But then their merit here was but *ſecondary*. It was the patriotic ſpirit of the *nation at large*, that reduced theſe dangerous claims and rendered them conſiſtent with the rights of the ſubject. And here patriotiſm ſhould ever ſtop; and it actually ſtopped here. But not ſo the Diſſenters of thoſe days. Having, by various artifices and falſehoods, got the lead in public meaſures, they never reſted, until they wrought all thoſe diſorders, calamities, and remorſeleſs barbarities, which you have deplored in this day's ſervice.

Thus, again, when the confuſions, which they brought upon the nation by wild notions both in government and religion, rendered it neceſſary to bring in monarchy

monarchy again, and when it returned in full tide, or rather in too full a tide, bringing in two princes, the one a licentious unprincipled man, the other an abſurd and headlong Popiſh bigot; here again oppoſition became neceſſary. And the Diſſenters, I with pleaſure acknowledge, had their ſhare in theſe tranſactions; both in the bill of excluſion and in the revolution. And they had their reward, as COMPLETE A TOLERATION as good order will admit of; which no wiſe or good churchman has ever envied, nor ever will envy them, as long as they uſe it with temper.

And it is, what they *ſhould* uſe with temper; as being a privilege, not merited by any peculiar ſervices or talents of theirs, nor extorted by any peculiar weight and importance of theirs in the ſcale of parties, but generouſly extended and indulged to them by the enlightened policy and benevolence of the great and glorious conductors of the revolution.

But it has been their misfortune ever to conſider it as a *right*, not an *indulgence*.

And

And in conſequence of this wrong perſuaſion, they have never been contented with it. From the firſt day to this, upon every favourable occaſion, they have been labouring, with indefatigable aſſiduity, to be put upon an equal footing with the eſtabliſhed church, though they have never endeavoured to ſhow, that I know of, how this is conſiſtent with the peace and order of the community. I could illuſtrate this in many inſtances.

But this at preſent is too wide a field: the ſurvey indeed will be unneceſſary. The violent proceedings, they are now carrying on, through the nation, are a ſufficient proof, without any hiſtorical evidences, of their reſtleſs, and I will add, their turbulent ſpirit.

There were two acts of parliament, left in force at the revolution; as a ſecurity for the eſtabliſhed religion. Surely, a ſecurity *in general* could not be wrong; ſurely, it was even neceſſary amidſt the diſorders, which the privileged diverſity of

of opinions would naturally occaſion. There is not, I ſuppoſe, a nation upon the earth without ſome eſtabliſhed form of worſhip; and this muſt, of courſe, have ſome defence eſtabliſhed by law againſt the intereſted machinations of rival parties.

"Well, but the acts themſelves (you will perhaps ſay) may be wrong." Why, really one would think ſo from the outrageous reſolutions, which the newspapers abound with; one would think theſe acts have ſomething in them exceedingly ſanguinary or oppreſſive, ſomething totally inconſiſtent with the rights of humanity, or tending to the utter extirpation of all true religion. One would naturally think thus from the noiſe and buſtle, which we hear and ſee!

But, really, this is not the caſe. I ſhall now ſhow you, that the hardſhips complained of are rather *imaginary* than *real*; that the complaints of theſe people have probably ſomething *elſe* in view, which at preſent they dare not publicly avow; and

and that, if churchmen do not unite to oppoſe them with vigour, their machinations muſt ſucceed, and a general convulſion muſt be the dreadful conſequence.

I ſay (1.) their hardſhips are rather imaginary, or rather pretended, than real.

They are as free as we to worſhip God in their own way: they are as ſecure as we in their perſons, occupations, properties and inheritances; and, if they have even a mind to take the road of *worldly ambition*, and aſpire to the poſts and honours of the ſtate, theſe too are open to them upon ONE *eaſy condition*, and that is, of taking the ſacrament in our way at a ſtated time, by way of ſecurity to the public, that they will not injure the eſtabliſhed religion, and will diſcharge the public offices with a good conſcience, a duty, of which the holy ſacrament is ſuppoſed to be the beſt pledge among chriſtians; and what hardſhip there can be in this, is beyond the comprehenſion of any common underſtanding. For all the

the difference between *them* and *us*, with regard to this moſt awful rite, is, that we receive it *kneeling*, in a ſuppliant attitude, they *ſitting* (as I am told) in a ſtate of lazy recumbency. We both agree, in this age of liberal knowledge, that the outward poſture is in itſelf an indifferent circumſtance; — and yet it is, becauſe lawful authority requires this ſmall act of decent compliance with the public religion, that they are raiſing ſuch rude clamours, forming ſuch tumultuous meetings, and paſſing ſuch furious and flaming reſolutions!

They ſay, it is proſtituting a religious ſervice to a ſecular purpoſe: the Diſſenters of a neighbouring town have gone farther; they have, *illiberally*, called it turning the church into a QUALIFYING OFFICE. Good God! what a hard expreſſion this, in this age of decency! *

* The Bolton Reſolutions make uſe of this phraſe; having borrowed it from the above-mentioned layman, who, though upon the whole a very diſingenuous malicious writer, has the decency to put it into the mouth of ſome profane wags.

The act ſhould be ſpoken of with more reverence. For the ſpirit of it ſpeaks this language. " You ſay you cannot " receive the ſacrament in the national " church, as it is a profanation of a reli- " gious ordinance to a ſecular purpoſe. " If ſo, the profanation is your own " fault; for all good men agree, that " religion ſhould conſecrate the *commoneſt* " *actions* of our lives; and that therefore " public offices, as being very important " truſts, require ſome *peculiar recogni-* " *ſances* of the duties belonging to them. " If you object to the *mode* of the eſta- " bliſhment, you diſgrace your profeſſed " liberality of ſentiments, as the only " difference between you and the church " lies in the mere trifling circumſtance of " bodily poſture; and when you can " divide from it upon ſo ſlight an account, " you deſerve excluſion from places of " truſt for ſuch a narrow, rigid, uncom- " plying prejudice. If you diſlike it, as " an engagement not to hurt the religion " of your country, you judge right indeed; " for it is ſuch an engagement, and, at

" the

" the ſame time, a call upon your con-
" ſciences as moral creatures; and, if you
" diſlike ſuch a neceſſary and ſalutary en-
" gagement, you muſt bear the conſe-
" quence; the church and ſtate being ſo
" interwoven and united, that they muſt
" ſtand or fall together."—This is the plain language of the Teſt Act; and here you ſee the grievance is imaginary, where Diſſenters are really *liberal* and *peaceably diſpoſed.**

(2.) This being the caſe, I ſhall now, ſecondly, ſhow, that their complaints have probably a ſecret view, which they

* I have borrowed this argument from a pamphlet lately publiſhed, called the *Danger of repealing the Teſt Act, a Letter to a Member of Parliament.* I cannot indeed profeſs an agreement with the author in all his latitudinarian candour; but I conceive this argument to be ſtrictly juſt.

This may be ſtrengthened by a ſimilar application of religion in the caſe of the *judicial oath.* This is a very ſolemn appeal to the Divine Being in ſecular matters. It is often profaned; yet no legiſlature can find out any other judicial teſt; for the quakers *affirmation* is but an oath with a little alteration of circumſtances. And as this ſeems to be the caſe with regard to the ſacramental teſt, the profanation of it is no juſt argument for its repeal.

cannot *yet* openly avow; and that is, the *ſubverſion* of the eſtabliſhment.

It is a well-known fact, that theſe complaints have originated with the Diſſenting Miniſters. They began with forming *committees of correſpondence* (as the *Americans* began their rebellion); they next held public aſſociations openly in their own names; they next aſſembled, under a fictitious form, as *delegates* from their reſpective congregations; and now they get ſome laymen to join them, with very prudential caution not exceeding three, (for many of their congregations could not furniſh more); and, placing ſome half-informed hot-headed zealot in the chair, they hold out the reſolutions of their meetings, as the general ſenſe and work of *immenſe* congregations (not one half of them, at the ſame time, perhaps, conſiſting of above forty or fifty people!) who know no more of the matter than this; that they would like, if any ſtate convulſion took place, to be relieved

lieved from the burden of maintaining their own teachers.*

Now every man muſt have ſome motive for what he does. The repeal of the Teſt Act, *ſimply conſidered*, is no concern at all to

* This is modeſtly and forcibly explained by Biſhop Halliſax, in his ſermon on January 30, 1788. "It is "of the nature of religious ſects, as ſuch, to conceive their "own ſyſtem of faith and worſhip to be purer, and to ap-"proach nearer the ſtandard of perfection than that of any "other; for on no principle but this can they be ſuppoſed "to have ſeparated from other religious ſocieties, whether "national or tolerated. Under this perſuaſion they will "always be trying (and the more ſincere they are in their "perſuaſion, the more earneſtly they will be trying) to "propagate their own opinions, and to advance their own "models on the ruins of the reſt; and, as the ſureſt way of "effecting this, to intereſt the ſtate in their ſervice, by "gaining a part of the legiſlature to their ſide. In this "purſuit, beſides the ſimple motive of truth, it may be "preſumed, they will be not a little ſtimulated from the "view of thoſe temporal emoluments, which they ſee an-"nexed to the religion of the magiſtrate, and from which "they themſelves, unjuſtly as they will think, are at pre-"ſent excluded. Nor is there any other way of preventing "them from accompliſhing their deſigns, and erecting them-"ſelves into the national church, than by keeping them out "of the public adminiſtration and taking care, that offices of "truſt and dignity, in the diſpoſal of government, ſhall be

to the Diſſenting *Miniſters*; as *they* can be no candidates for *civil* offices. What then can be their motive? Why, a writer of their own has, with a moſt *unlucky inadvertency*, diſcovered the great ſecret.* This writer is the very perſon, whoſe tract is recommended, in the Liverpool Reſolutions. The wealthier among them, it ſeems, ſubmitting to the teſt, come by

" conferred on ſuch perſons only, whoſe principles incline " them to preſerve the conſtitution in all its parts. And " this is the preciſe buſineſs of a teſt." The Biſhop goes on in the ſame moderate and forcible manner to ſhow the neceſſity of ſuch an act of political ſelf-preſervation. Now the writer (whom I mentioned before and whom our preſent reſolvers are blindly following), read this, and of courſe muſt anſwer it. And how does he anſwer it? Why, by virulent abuſe and calling an excellent Biſhop of our church a *perſecutor*, and even aſcribing a ſpirit of perſecution to the church in general, p. 53.

In this way of proceeding conteſts may be carried on to the end of the world,—or till thoſe, who will hear no reaſon, weary out their opponents with perſevering noiſe and vehemence, and get their ends at laſt by importunity or menaces.

* The writer mentioned before; an inconſiſtent diſingenuous and ſplenetic writer, in my opinion; however the compoſer of the Liverpool Reſolutions was pleaſed to commend him. p. 59, 64, and ſeveral others.

degrees

degrees to grow *peaceable citizens*, and to approve of the eſtabliſhment; and here they drop their ſubſcriptions to the meeting houſe, give up their old connections, and are loſt to the party. And this is the grievance, they want to redreſs; that is, they want *that* removed, which is the preſervation of our happy conſtitution. For ſhould the Diſſenters come into places without any reſtraint at all, with all their prejudices about them, and by degrees get a majority in the Houſe of Commons, (and I know not what is to prevent this, when their cool determined violence has nothing but the church's unſuſpicious ſimplicity to contend with); they will then know well, from *old practice*, how to diſpoſe of the two other branches of the legiſlature; the Lords, whom that writer *even now* calls the true friends of DESPOTISM;* the Biſhops, whom he even now openly brands as *perſecutors*; and the King, whom ſome dark inſidious conductors of the public prints† have long

* p. 7.

† It is commonly ſaid, Diſſenters conduct moſt of the public prints: a ſhrewd contrivance, if true; for it is poiſoning the fountain head of public information.

made

made vile in the eyes of his ſubjects. A party, diſtinguiſhed by an inflexible and unrelenting perſeverance, can ſoon vote theſe orders uſeleſs.

(3.) Our ſafety, therefore, lies, as I muſt obſerve now in the laſt place, in a vigorous oppoſition. The *manner* and *time* I pretend not to direct. At preſent we ſee and hear nothing but their noiſy, furious, inflammatory reſolutions.* But certainly the ſpirit of the nation muſt be rouſed at laſt. The diſturbers of our peace are not, I conceive, one to a thouſand, even in this trading country, which abounds with ſects and parties. I can only recommend it to you to watch the opportunity of acting, and to exerciſe it with vigour. Let not rude noiſe paſs for ſtrength of numbers; nor impudent vague aſſertions paſs for ſolid arguments.*

The

* I am ſorry I am obliged to uſe theſe ſevere terms; but, where a perſon has not time or room to examine the things, which he diſapproves of, with the minuteneſs of exact criticiſm, general terms of cenſure are his only reſource; and all that can

The ſame meaſures are viſibly purſued now, which in the laſt century terminated at laſt in the tragedy of this day. Their preachers *then* were the trumpeters of ſedition; and the conſequences, which *then* followed, may be again apprehended. For

can be required in the caſe is, that they ſhall be characteriſtic.

The Diſſenters and Churchmen indeed will differ in judgment here: but there is one common principle in which they ſhould agree; that bold unqualified aſſertions, without proofs or explanations, upon diſputable points, may inflame the paſſions, but inform not the mind.

I ſhall juſt give a ſhort ſpecimen of the fallaciouſneſs of all the reſolutions, that have ever fallen under my notice; and ſhall then put an end to the reader's trouble and my own.

Their reſolutions are reducible to *three* heads; that of RIGHTS — GRIEVANCES — and the MEANS OF REDRESS.

I. MEANS OF REDRESS.

1. They reſolve to claim their rights, either ſeparately or collectively, at the bar of the Houſe of Commons. — This is preciſely Lord George Gordon's argument; drawn from the rights of the law of nature, (which I ſhall conſider by and by); and to be anſwered only by the inſtruments of that law, the ſword and bayonet.

2. They reſolve to lay our parliamentary repreſentatives under an expreſs and ſolemn promiſe, of gratifying their wiſhes,

For, though the preſent Diſſenters have dropped their old fanaticiſm, and really are grown a liberal claſs of people, yet there is a determined hoſtility in their preſent ſpirit, which is plainly capable of any exceſſes upon a return of a ſimilar opportunity. And

wiſhes, without the leaſt regard to their own convictions, and the ſentiments of the majority of their conſtituents. This is claiming liberty for themſelves, and leaving none for others; a very conſiſtent and reaſonable propoſal from the apoſtles of liberty; Dr. Price's Diſciples!

3. They reſolve to thank ſome one particular repreſentative in a county, who may happen to vote for them; though the fulſome compliment be what his generous blood muſt diſdain, though it be meant as a rude affront to fifteen other gentlemen, who muſt be ſuppoſed to act equally upon honour and conſcience, and though it ſeem to be intended to throw a wide and populous and trading county into the ruinous confuſion of conteſted elections!

4. They reſolve to call in the Scotch and Iriſh nations to their aſſiſtance. This is preaching up rebellion with a witneſs. The Iriſh, in their preſent ſtate, have no buſineſs with the politics of England; and the Scotch are quite contented with things as they are, very unhappily indeed for ſome people, as the layman complains (p. 64.); for *not one of them*, it ſeems, *appears now at the old Jury*. A cruel caſe to ſome; but not, it ſeems, to the Scotch themſelves! That generous and enlightened nation are not aſhamed to diſcard their old prejudices, though they wiſely adhere to their old conſtitution. They are not to be deceived by the inſidious arts of faction.

5. They

And what is then to be expected? I tremble to imagine the consequences. Solemn oaths and engagements, which good consciences could not possibly submit to, were devised; and *may* be devised again; the established clergy were universally turned

5. They resolve to persevere, *i. e.* they resolve to murmur and clamour, to plague and teaze, to disturb and convulse the legislature and the public until they succeed—or, despairing of success this way, till they try some other expedient. I leave it to the reader to determine, whether I speak harshly, in calling such persons turbulent citizens.

II. GRIEVANCES.

1. They are obliged to bear the *burdens* of the state, while they cannot participate of its *emoluments*. The burdens they are justly required to bear in return for the protection, peace, and happiness, which they enjoy in society; and the emoluments they *may* enjoy, if they please, upon *one* easy condition, which they may without hesitation comply with, if they are as *liberal* and *well-disposed*, as they profess to be.

2. Dissenters are eligible into parliament, and it is a hardship, they say, that they are not equally eligible into *all* posts and departments, *i. e.* because they are eligible into a place, where they may superintend the just interests of their party and do good, and yet do no harm from their fewness of number, and whither they cannot go but by our choice, *therefore* (mark the inference!) they should be put into places, by virtue of which they will necessarily get an ascendency over us and fill the parliament with people of their own

turned out, unpenſioned, unprotected, unpitied, to poverty, want and wretchedneſs: the eſtates of the beſt and nobleſt families were confiſcated: men ſprung from the loweſt orders, and bathed in the blood of their fellow-citizens, rioted in the ſpoils of the nation; and the unhappy king himſelf, when no end in the world could be anſwered but the gratification of

own levelling principles! Surely, this is a glaring perverſion of national liberality!

3. Without a repeal of the teſt laws, diſſenting laymen cannot be exciſe men, tide-waiters, &c. they cannot ſell gloves, and hats, and quack-medicines, &c; and the diſſenting miniſters cannot collect the duties upon births and burials, the parliament, very inconſiſtently, it ſeems, requiring them to do two contrary acts. So ſays the Bolton Reſolutioniſt, and, the great ſtorehouſe of all deſperate reſolutions, the layman; who has collected ſuch grievances as theſe, with an ingenuity, unknown to the knotty-pated gentlemen of Weſtminſter hall; for they generally proceed upon law and facts.

III. RIGHTS.

As to rights; there neither are nor can be any, but what flow either from the law of *nature*, or the laws of *ſociety*, or from the *goſpel*. The rights of nature they have given up, as living in a comfortable ſtate of ſociety; their rights, as members of ſociety, are preciſely what the laws of their country give them, and that is, a *toleration* only, not an *eſtabliſhment*;

of *malicious wickedness*, was brought, a poor, meek, helpless victim, like a criminal to a mock-trial, and, with a barbarity unknown even to uncivilized states, butchered openly, in the face of day, like the worst of malefactors.

Numbers

establishment; and their rights, upon the footing of the gospel, are just what the laws of their country give, consistently with a righteous, sober, and godly life. The kingdom of Christ being not of this world, meddling not with the constitutions, or orders, or offices of political bodies; and teaching only a virtuous discharge of our several conditions, whatever they are, and patience under irremediable trials and difficulties.

The resolutions have confounded these three rights with the most illogical disorder of ideas. Let the authors of these resolutions only disentangle their ideas, and they will find their arguments to be drawn from the wild state of uncivilized nature, which really never existed, but is rather an *imaginary* state (though a *necessary* supposition) in order to get a just notion of what rights we *have* resigned, and *how far* we have resigned them, in the artificial combinations of society. What is true of one state is not true of the other. The claim of an *absolute uncontroulable liberty* in any one order, at the expence of others, belongs only to the savage state of nature. Society is a *virtual* agreement, that every one shall *limit* his *personal* claims, and bring his powers and talents into one common stock, for one common end, the good of the whole association. Whoever act otherwise, are

no

Numbers of Diſſenters, I am told, even in this country and age, have been heard to glory in the atrocious deed. I have often candidly hoped, that this, if it *could*

no longer ſocial creatures: they withdraw themſelves into the ſtate of nature; and are to be reſtrained from miſchief, upon the common principle of that ſtate, by all the exertions which *ſelf-preſervation* dictates.

P. S. When I ſuppoſed (p. 17.) the only difference between the Diſſenters and us about the ſacrament lies in the indifferent circumſtance of bodily attitude, my authority was the pamphlet mentioned before, *The Danger of repealing the Teſt Act; a Letter to a Member of Parliament: printed for Lowndes, London:* which I beg leave to recommend to the reader, as explaining ſome points, only touched upon, in this imperfect diſcourſe. I ſtill think the author right, though I have been juſt told, that there are other differences.

It is certain, we had no other diſagreement, till Biſhop Hoadley's *plain account* appeared; and, if ſeveral, or even the whole body of the Diſſenters have ſince adopted the Biſhop's idea, they have reaſon, from his example, as a man whom they juſtly admire, to ſuppoſe, that this notion, though not approved of by ſome among us, is very conſiſtent with church-communion. There is no hypotheſis, ſhort of *tranſubſtantiation*, with regard to this ordinance, which a liberal chriſtian cannot tolerate, and even entertain with ſafety and improvement. And when we add to this, that public truſts ſhould be undertaken with deliberate purpoſes of diſcharging them virtuouſly and faithfully, that the ſacrament is the beſt means among chriſtians of awakening conſcience to a juſt

ſenſe

could poſſibly be true, was rather done or ſaid by way of counterbalancing the immoderate honours paid to the memory of this once erring but pious monarch by

ſenſe of moral obligations; that, if it be profaned, it but ſhares the common fate of all the outward means of religion (where a few abuſes have never yet been conſidered as an argument for the total diſuſe or abolition of them); that, if the Diſſenters will but lay aſide party prejudice, and ſubmit to this rite in common with us, as an expreſſion of their piety and virtue and of their friendly diſpoſitions to the church, it will be a means of extending a ſpirit of peace, moderation and harmony more widely among us (virtues, without which religion cannot ſubſiſt long among us in our divided ſtate); and that if they will ſtill adhere to their party prejudice, they are but juſtly reſtrained from places that will put offenſive weapons into their hands againſt us;—when, I ſay, theſe things are added, I flatter myſelf that the *very* few members of the eſtabliſhment, who favour their preſent claims, will excuſe my reluctant appearance upon this very unhappy occaſion. There are many liberal and worthy perſons among the Diſſenters too, whoſe indulgence I can promiſe myſelf.

From the zealots of the party I can expect no mercy. I pray to God, that their zeal may not raiſe the old cry that "the church is in danger," and bring again the turbulent times, which I cannot review without concern. At leaſt, let the preſent Teſt remain, till as good a one can be found out, or ſome able Diſſenting writer has clearly ſhown that two or more co-ordinate eſtabliſhments can ſubſiſt together in any ſtate, or that there are ſufficient revenues in the church for the maintenance both of the Clergy and Diſſenting Miniſters.

ſome

ſome over-zealous churchmen. It may be partly ſo: but it is certain, they have too much of a republican ſpirit: it is a ſpirit to be dreaded: it is hoſtile to our well-balanced conſtitution; a mixt government (as I mentioned in the beginning of this diſcourſe); and it is the buſineſs of true patriotiſm to oppoſe it, when it appears as violent as it does in the preſent conjuncture; becauſe it tends to a conteſt, which neceſſarily muſt bring on confuſion, and, in its beſt iſſue, can only eſtabliſh a democracy, for which this wide empire is not adapted; but moſt probably muſt end in ſome dreadful uſurpation, the uſual conſequence of national convulſions.

Their appeal to the preſent ſtruggle in a neighbouring nation, is not only indelicate and impolitic, but fallacious. We ſhould, in common ſenſe, wait to ſee the ſucceſs of our neighbour-patriots, before we try experiments upon *our own* ſtate. Should they ſucceed in what they *ſeem* to meditate, they will then have but the happy conſtitution, which we have long

poſſeſſed:

poſſeſſed: our church has been already ſtripped of its exorbitant claims and treaſures, and the king's prerogative limited and aſcertained; and we cannot well go lower, without becoming a mere democracy.

That this experiment may not be tried amongſt us; that it may be cruſhed in its firſt appearances, is, I hope, the prayer of every one who hears me this day.

THE END.